

Disaster recovery perspectives from the inside

"In New Orleans we are dealing with the reconstruction (with 50,000 plus FEMA trailers that can't stand up to a tropical storm much less a Cat 1), preparing and repairing a now inadequate flood protection system and a contested election with more than half of our population displaced. We're a bit busy.

Couldn't help but notice your missive on leadership and also noting the same question popping up during our small conference call the other day. One principal that everyone in our emergency planning community seems to lose sight of is that it is the guy and his family that are on the bottom rung of the ladder who should be in charge. One of the problems that stems from big bureaucratic government (Federal, State and Municipal) is that we make the arrogant mistake of thinking that because we have these meetings that we actually fully understand the problems and their solutions. That is the number one lesson that was learned in Katrina. For those of you who count yourselves *literati* man v nature is a common topic and if you recall nature always wins in the end.

So make sure that the biggest gap in your planning is not that one that exists between you and the population that you are planning to protect. Create programs that include not exclude that guy and his family in the planning process. Encourage him in all ways to create his own survival/evacuation plan then facilitate execution of his plan. Create detailed registries of people that cannot create or cannot execute a plan and lean way forward for those folks in the planning and facilitation. The first part of situational awareness should be taking place long before your incident ever occurs.

In Louisiana, we are realizing that some of the old, low tech ways are the ones that work best. They were not based on depending on the "reliable" leadership of Federal, State and Municipal governments but on communities and neighbors." - Mr. Jay Smith

Mr. Smith is serving as IT Implementation Committee Director for the Metropolitan Healthcare Taskforce. The taskforce is helping to rebuild the healthcare system in New Orleans, focusing on re-establishing medical records digitally for the large number of special needs patients that may be evacuated several times over the next hurricane season. Mr. Smith has over 30 years of experience in medicine and maritime security and operations.